



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

NEW JERSEY MAN GETS JAIL TIME IN CONNECTION WITH ILLEGAL MONEY TRANSFER SCHEME THAT MOVED \$100 MILLION TO PAKISTAN

-- Fourth of six defendants sentenced in the ICE / IRS investigation --

NEWARK, N.J. – A key player in a scheme to illegally transfer more than \$100 million to Pakistan through a New Jersey money transmittal business has been sentenced to nearly four years in prison as a result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Umer Darr, a Pakistani native and naturalized U.S. citizen of Bayonne, N.J., was sentenced earlier this week to 46 months incarceration and three years supervised release by U.S. District Court Judge Joseph A. Greenaway pursuant to his conviction for operating an illegal money transmitting business in violation of Title 18 USC 1960 and for aiding and abetting in violation of Title 18 USC 2. Darr was also ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and a \$100 special assessment imposed by the court.

ICE and IRS agents arrested Darr in June 2003 along with five other men who were linked to a scheme that routed an estimated \$100 million to Pakistan through Access Inc. of USA, a licensed money transmitting business located in Iselin, N.J. Access Inc. operated out of an upstairs apartment of a converted house with no signs advertising the business. The business kept an unlisted phone number; did not advertise in the Yellow Pages; and could only be accessed through an unmarked rear door that was typically kept locked.

The investigation determined that Syed Azhar, an officer of Access Inc., allegedly used his money transmitting business to routinely receive currency in amounts greater than \$10,000 from a select group of unlicensed money remitters. Azhar allegedly deposited that currency in a bank account in the name of Access Inc. of USA, and subsequently asked the bank to wire transfer it to various recipients in Pakistan.

Darr was one of those unlicensed money remitters who routinely brought large sums of cash to Access Inc. for transfer overseas. Utilizing his unlicensed money transfer business in Manhattan known as Kashmir Money Transfer, Darr repeatedly deposited cash amounts in excess of \$10,000 with Access Inc with no currency transaction reports being filed on these transactions.

Under state laws in New Jersey and New York, money-transmitting businesses must be licensed, and it is a federal crime to operate a money transmitting business without the required state license. Darr's sentence is the latest enforcement action in the investigation. The status of the other defendants is as follows:

- **Syed Azhar** of Morganville, N.J., an officer of Access Inc. of USA and accused ringleader of the operation, has been charged with aiding and abetting the illegal money transmitting businesses conducted by his co-defendants, and also with failing to file required currency transaction reports concerning cash transactions in excess of \$10,000. Azhar is also charged with conspiracy to cause a failure to file required currency transaction reports. Azhar is a citizen of Pakistan and a legal permanent resident of the United States. His prosecution is pending.
- **Umar Mushtaq and Khurram Farid**, both of Brooklyn, N.Y., were associated with a money transfer business known as Fast Global Services in Brooklyn. Both have pleaded guilty to charges arising from the investigation and have been sentenced. Both Mushtaq and Farid are citizens of Pakistan.
- **Farooq Malik**, a citizen of Pakistan and a resident of Astoria, N.Y., was sentenced in April 2005 to 43 months incarceration and three years supervised release following his conviction for operating an illegal money transmitter business; and aiding and abetting. Malik operated Link to Link, Inc., an unlicensed money transmitting business located in Long Island, N.Y., through which he transferred funds to Access Inc.
- **Ali Cheema**, of Iselin, N.J., entered into a pre-trial diversion agreement to charges associated with the scheme after he was videotaped preparing phony receipts for Access Inc. Cheema is a citizen of Pakistan and a legal permanent resident of the U.S.

The Darr sentencing is the latest enforcement action in ICE's nationwide crackdown on unlicensed money transmittal businesses. The USA Patriot Act, which was signed into law in October 2001, enhanced ICE's ability to combat the international movement of illicit funds through money transmittal businesses by amending the 18 U.S.C. Section 1960 statute. As a result of the change in the law, money transmittal businesses in the United States must be registered with the Treasury Department and be licensed by appropriate state authorities.

Since the enactment of the USA Patriot Act in late 2001, ICE agents have aggressively targeted illegal money transmittal businesses and underground "hawalas" nationwide, given the vulnerabilities they pose. ICE investigations into unlicensed money service businesses have resulted in the arrest of 155 individuals, 142 criminal indictments and the seizure of some \$25.8 million since the Patriot Act became law.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.